

Hello,

My name is Matthew Castanho and I am a first year student in the Naturopathic Medical program at the University of Bridgeport. My expected graduation date is May 2017 and I intensely look forward to the day I will be able to offer my healing services to the public; as was done for me by a Naturopathic physician.

When I was 20 years old, I underwent a bout of extreme weight loss, depression, was constantly cold, and lost my general zest for life. I was adhering to a healthy diet according to my primary care physician, as is proclaimed by the media, and what still is widely accepted among the general public. It was low in fat, low in cholesterol, moderate in fish, etc. I experienced the unfortunate passing of my mother after a 3 year battle with brain cancer and the experience propelled me in a direction of health, with sights on longevity. For this reason, I became obsessed with eating according to perfection.

After some time, I began to notice that not only was I losing weight, but I was becoming continually fatigued. My libido was declining, my passion for athletics was disappearing, I no longer sought spontaneous adventure, and spending time developing relationships became a chore. I was depressed. I went to see my primary care physician, an MD, and according to my blood work, everything seemed within normal limits.

My father is a CPA and has a number of clients, one of whom is Dr. Frank Aieta, ND out of West Hartford. It was around this time I'd been interested in nutrition (yet an accounting major at the University of Connecticut) so we three went out to dinner one evening in order to learn more about Frank's career. He discussed his education, explained what he did as a Naturopath, and offered a free consultation. I gladly accepted.

Upon presenting my symptoms to Frank, he inquired about my lifestyle habits, diet, and sleep; all questions I'd never been asked by medical doctors. He gave me a blood work form to complete and when the results returned, they were near identical to the one I'd gotten earlier by my primary care. However, Frank's interpretation was vastly different. While I did fall within normal ranges, the ranges were enormous and I was on the extreme low end for cholesterol, testosterone, and thyroid hormone. That explained the poor libido, lack of sexual appetite, and general lethargy. To rule out any pathology, Frank referred me to Dr. Beatriz Tendler, MD, of UConn's Health Center.

Dr. Tendler ran a pathology scan, which fortunately returned negative, and reviewed my blood results, offering me synthetic testosterone and thyroxine (synthetic thyroid hormone). At 20 years old, I knew that if I were to get on these pharmaceuticals, I would be on them for life. I opted alternatively.

I returned to Frank for a follow-up and he explained the physiology of what was happening in my body. Not only was my diet lacking in fat, a necessary substrate for hormone synthesis, but I was likely experiencing some heavy metal toxicity, which would explain the suppressed active thyroid hormone. He had me get tested for mercury (given my fish consumption) and sure enough, the results came back strongly positive.

After some consultation, he entirely changed my diet, supplied me with herbs to detox the mercury, and balanced my body chemistry with specific nutrients I was lacking. Within a week I was feeling substantially better, my energy levels were back online, my libido was increasing, and my zest for life seemed to be returning. I was feeling alive again.

Today I sit here writing this email, about to turn 24 on Sunday, and so incredibly grateful for my experience with Frank. He took me from a sickly state and allowed me to flourish into who I am today without the use of pharmaceuticals that I would otherwise be dependent on for life. To make a long story short, I changed my career path from Accounting to Nutritional Sciences and Psychology, with a concentration in Biochemistry, and now I am nearly through my first year in Naturopathic medical school. I am healthy, active, physically strong, and happy.

I am incredibly passionate in the natural healing capacity of the body and strongly believe that a doctor should support this process, not circumvent it with pharmaceuticals. However, that does not discount the fact that in acute circumstances I whole-heartedly applaud its efficacy. I plead that an amendment be made to Bill #5537 to expand the scope of practice for Naturopaths.

When I graduate, I would like to serve as primary care physician for my patients, and so I will require a defined list of prescriptive rights, the ability to order and sell medical equipment, and the ability to perform minor surgery in office; all skills I will be learning as a student over these four years at the school.

Please consider my story and recognize the immensely beneficial impact Naturopathic physicians are having on the wellness of the public and the individual.

Connecticut needs to show its support.

Thank you,

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